



News Release

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IDWR EXTENDS MORATORIUM, CREATES ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR TWIN FALLS AREA GEOTHERMAL AQUIFER SYSTEM

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State water managers have extended for another five years a moratorium on geothermal ground water in the Twin Falls area, the Department of Water Resources announced today.

At the same time IDWR also created a special advisory committee to help develop a management plan for the geothermal aquifer, which can chart the future course for the moratorium area.

The moratorium, originally put in place in 1987, essentially stops issuance of permits for any new water right development and limits development of existing permits for the heated water coming from the geothermal aquifer.

IDWR originally established the moratorium because of declining pressure in the geothermal aquifer, which covers an area of approximately 140 square miles around Twin Falls south of the Snake River. Data collected over the 15 years since indicate that although the rate of decline in artesian pressures has slowed, it has yet to fully stabilize.

The advisory committee will develop a plan that will look at issues such as the requirements and conditions needed to allow development of the resource while protecting existing water rights; well construction and maintenance requirements; the adequacy of monitoring and reporting programs; and the need for revisions to the area covered by the moratorium.

IDWR now is accepting nominations for members on the advisory committee who can represent water users and others interested in the management of the resource. IDWR will take nominations through the end of August.

IDWR had extended the moratorium twice before, in 1992 and again in 1997. The College of Southern Idaho petitioned IDWR early this spring to extend it another five years. The agency held a public meeting on the petition June 28 in Twin Falls that resulted in nine written comments to IDWR regarding the petition.